

In the wake of allegations that Blackwater Worldwide engaged in the bribery of Iraqi officials following a September 2007 shooting incident, Rep. Peter Welch on Wednesday called for an investigation of the company – now called Xe Services – by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

According to a New York Times report, Blackwater executives authorized \$1 million in bribes to Iraqi Interior Ministry officials in order to silence criticism of the 2007 incident, during which 17 Iraqi civilians were killed.

Welch called for the investigation from Pakistan, where he is taking part in a delegation organized by the Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs.

In a letter sent Wednesday to Oversight Committee Chairman Edolphus Towns, Welch called Blackwater “a reckless and dangerous organization” and wrote, “The United States government simply cannot turn a blind eye to such actions.”

The full letter is copied below:

November 11, 2009

Dear Chairman Towns,

I write in response to the very troubling news that Blackwater Worldwide - now called Xe Services - has been accused of bribing Iraqi officials in order to silence outcry about the September 2007 killing of 17 Iraqi civilians.

Blackwater has earned a reputation as a reckless and dangerous organization. Early reports indicate that Blackwater may have violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and potentially interfered with a grand jury inquiry by issuing these bribes. The United States government simply cannot turn a blind eye to such actions

Blackwater's practices have been the subject of an Oversight and Government Reform Committee investigation before. I strongly urge you to begin a new investigation to determine exactly what happened and whether any laws were broken. Blackwater officials must be held accountable for their actions.

Sincerely,

Peter F. Welch